

THE GENERIC NAMES *PEDIOCÆTES* AND  
*POOCÆTES*.

BY THEODORE GILL.

THE two generic names, *Pediocetes* and *Poocetes*, have been much animadverted upon, but have nevertheless been adopted in the A. O. U. Check-List of North American Birds. These names were adopted because it was supposed that they were the first ones published for the genera involved. That such was not the case will be made evident. Not only were they not first published, but before publication Baird himself substituted for them names of entirely different etymology and only resembling them in superficial appearance. The substitute names were of later formation — “happy afterthoughts” — though published first in the same volume. The substitute names were also adopted generally, and not until long afterwards were the abandoned names taken up again and generally adopted.

I.

In 1858 Baird published his great work on the ‘Birds of North America,’ under cover of the ‘Reports of Explorations and Surveys’ for a Pacific railroad, ‘volume IX.’ In the descriptive portion he introduced, as new genera *Poocetes* (p. 447) and *Pediocetes* (p. 625), but in the table of the higher groups, preceding the descriptive portion, he used the names *Poocetes* and *Pedioecetes*, referring to the pages on which the genera were on following pages described.

It is known that Baird submitted partial proofs of his work to a correspondent and had been informed that *-caetes* was not a legitimate component, and that *-oecetes* should replace it. The assumption that Baird thus submitted to has been maintained ever since. For example, Mr. Elliot, in the October (1898) number of ‘The Auk,’ has remarked (p. 295) that “neither could *πεδιον* and *οικέτης* be correctly compounded into *Pediocetes*, two blunders in one word.”

True, if the assumption were true! but *πεδιον* and *κοίτης* could be compounded into *Pediocætes* and the resultant would be a word abundantly sanctioned by classical usage. Put in italics, the difference between *Pediocætes* and *Pediocetes* is small indeed, and as Baird may never have seen the pattern name otherwise than in italics, it is no wonder that at first sight he might have mistaken the *æ* for *e* and carried over his impressions into other fields.

## II.

Baird unquestionably modelled the names *Pediocætes* and *Poocætes* after *Ammocætes*. He suffered from obliquity of vision or mind respecting the last name and rendered it *Ammocetes* instead of *Ammocætes*: the name was so spelled in the 'Iconographic Cyclopædia' (II, 207, 208, 1851). He later (1854) based a generic name for a true frog (*Helocætes*) on the same model. Finally (1858) he coined the bird names *Nephocætes*, *Poocætes* and *Pediocætes* after the same patterns. Baird was not acquainted with Greek, and when he was informed that the bird names should have been written *Nephoecetes*, *Pooecetes*, and *Pedioecetes*, he not unnaturally assumed that his critic was correct and altered the names correspondingly in the table of contents. But his critic was not correct, and was probably ignorant of the model Baird had used. That model was justified by a number of ancient Greek names. Two of the best known names of ichthyology were classical Greek names used for genera which are the types of distinct families — *Exocoetus* and *Hemerocoetes*: *Exocoetus*, misapplied by Linnæus to the flying fishes, appears in the works of Theophrastus, Aelianus and Oppianus, and was a component of *ξέω* and *κοίτη* — a fish sleeping out of the water; *Hemerocoetes*, misapplied by Cuvier and Valenciennes, to a New Zealand genus of fishes, occurs as the name of an undetermined fish in Oppian, and was a compound of *ἡμέρα*, day and *κοίτη*. Another well-known zoological name is that of a genus of Cystignathoid batrachians — *Borborocoetes*: this was literally reproduced from a designation in the 'Batrachomyomachia' translated in Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon as "mudcoucher." Still further, by a notable coincidence the name *Pediocætes* is closely

approximated by a medieval Greek name used by Maximus Planudes in his 'Anthology'—*Pedocoetes*—the only difference being that the first component of *Pedocoetes* was  $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\delta\omicron\nu$ , the ground, while that of *Pediocetes* was  $\pi\epsilon\delta\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$ , a plain.

These examples amply justified Baird in the coining of the names in question, and the only mistake he made was in the substitution of *a* for *o*.

### III.

It will be thus seen that *Pediocetes* and *Poocetes*, by a very slight alteration, might have been corrected into *Pediocoetes* and *Poocoetes*. As it is, through misunderstanding, names of entirely different etymology were suggested in place of them, and those very different names must be accepted. They must be accepted for the following reasons:—

1. The substitute names *Poocetes* and *Pedioecetes* were deliberate corrections of *Poocetes* and *Pediocetes*.
2. They were published not only simultaneously with the incorrect names, but "stand first in the book."
3. They were adopted in the quarto edition of the "Catalogue of North American Birds" (Oct. 1858) and the octavo edition (1859).
4. They were in part at least accepted before the incorrectly formed names, *Poocetes* having been adopted by Sclater in 1859 (P. Z. S., 379) and *Pedioecetes*<sup>1</sup> by Hayden in 1861 (Trans. Am. Phil. Soc., N. S. XII, 172).
5. They were generally adopted at first and only replaced later by the incorrect names.

### IV.

The data respecting the species in question given in the A. O. U. code and Check-List of N. A. Birds should be replaced by the following:—

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<sup>1</sup> Suckley also in 1861, retained the text name *Pediocetes*.

**Pedioecetes Baird.**

- Pedioecetes* BAIRD, B. N. A. 1858, xxi. (= *Pediocaetes*, p. 625).  
308. **Pedioecetes phasianellus** (LINN.).  
*Pedioecetes phasianellus* (part.) BAIRD, B. N. A. 1858, xlv.  
308a. **Pedioecetes phasianellus columbianus** (ORD).  
*Pedioecetes phasianellus* var. *columbianus* COUES, Key, 1872,  
234.  
308b. **Pedioecetes phasianellus campestris** RIDGW.  
*Pedioecetes phasianellus campestris* RIDGW. Proc. Biol. Soc.  
Wash. II, 1884, 93.

**Poocetes Baird.**

- Poocetes* BAIRD, B. N. A. 1858, xx. (= *Pooaetes*, p. 447).  
540. **Poocetes gramineus** (GMEL.).  
*Poocetes gramineus* BAIRD, B. N. Am. 1858, xxxix.  
540a. **Poocetes gramineus confinis** (BAIRD).  
[*Pooaetes gramineus*] variety *confinis* BAIRD, B. N. Am.  
1858, 448.  
[*Poocetes gramineus*] var. *confinis* COUES, Key, 1872, 136.  
540b. **Poocetes gramineus affinis** (MILLER).  
*Pooaetes gramineus affinis* MILLER, Auk, V, 1888, 404.

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**DESCRIPTION OF A NEW HYLOCICHLA.**

BY HARRY C. OBERHOLSER.

TRUE *Hylodichla ustulata* appears to be divisible into two fairly well defined geographical races, one of which is without a name. The type of *Hylodichla ustulata* came from the Columbia River, and examination shows it to belong to the form characteristic of the Northwest Coast region. The bird inhabiting interior and southern California may therefore be called

**Hylodichla ustulata œdica**, subsp. nov.

CHARS. SUBSP.—*Hylodichla H. u. ustulatae similis, sed hypochondriis et partibus superioribus pallidioribus ac minus rufescentibus.*